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STATE FOR EUR/CARC, EB/TPP/MTA AND EB/TPP/BTA
COMMERCE FOR 4231 DANICA STARKS
STATE PASS USTR FOR PAUL BURKHEAD

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ETRD](#) [KTIA](#) [USTR](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: RUSSIAN WTO NEGOTIATOR TO COME TO TBILISI FOR
TALKS MAY 30-31

REF: A. 06 TBILISI 3265
[B. 06 TBILISI 3047](#)

[1](#)1. (U) This telegram is Sensitive but Unclassified. Not for Internet distribution.

[1](#)2. (SBU) DCM met on May 16 with Valeri Chechelashvili, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, who said that Russia has approached Georgia to hold further discussions about the Georgia-Russia bilateral agreement for Russia's accession to the WTO. Although Russia suggested holding the talks in Moscow, the GOG invited the Russians, as the candidate country, to come to Tbilisi. The Georgians consider this normal procedure in WTO accession negotiations. As a result, Maxim Medvedkov, the lead Russian WTO negotiator, will come to Tbilisi on May 30-31 to meet with Georgian negotiators, including Deputy Minister of Economic Development Tamara Kovsiridze. The last discussions between Georgia and Russia on WTO accession were in Geneva in January. To our knowledge, the meeting would be the first relatively high-level visit by a Russian government official to Tbilisi since the October 2006 arrest and expulsion of Russian GRU spies.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Georgia reopened its bilateral agreement with Russia last year, citing Russia's maintaining of border crossings into Abkhazia and South Ossetia that the GOG deems to be illegal, in that they are not authorized or staffed by the Georgian government. Chechelashvili confirmed that Georgia's position has not changed and the border crossing issue is the only one preventing finalizing a bilateral agreement. He repeated the GOG suggestion that EU-monitored border crossings in Transnistria could serve as a model to resolve the Georgia-Russia impasse.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Comment: Georgia shows every intention of sticking by its guns on the border crossing issue. This is Georgia's only point of leverage in the strained bilateral relations with its giant northern neighbor, and the Georgians are determined to use it to establish some control over the unregulated, illegal trafficking of goods, HEU, counterfeit U.S. dollars, persons and weapons that is thought to take place through the conflict regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Any solution acceptable to Georgia will be a tough sell to the Abkhaz and South Ossetians, who are supported by Russia. So far, Georgia is keeping the issue in WTO channels and avoiding politicizing the issue. We understand that Russia still has more than one bilateral negotiation and complex multilateral discussions to complete before the Georgian objections are the only remaining hurdle to its accession.

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